

Appendix B. Peer Review and Best Practices

National Research



The following section is a peer review of coordination activities nationwide. A peer review is a useful tool for providing insight into how other regions and agencies address transportation coordination. The lessons learned based on their experience with transportation coordination provide valuable information for the San Francisco Bay area. This information was gathered directly from individuals involved in coordination activities in these areas, through questionnaires and telephone interviews asking them to describe their experiences, and supplemented with research of published plans and studies related to coordination. Peers were selected because they were known to represent good examples of coordination in a metropolitan area, or because their programs incorporated elements that could be replicated in the Bay Area.

This information is presented to help inform local programs about efforts undertaken by their colleagues and counterparts in other parts of the country, in order to stimulate ideas and suggest new options. In some cases, these programs may not be possible to replicate in California or the Bay Area due to funding sources or policies specific to those areas.

Information is presented on the following regions and agencies:

- | Denver-Boulder Metropolitan Area (Denver, Colorado)
- | Tarrant County, Texas
- | Heart of Texas Council of Governments
- | Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) (Austin, Texas)
- | Chicago Regional Transportation Authority
- | Maricopa Association of Governments (Phoenix, AZ)

- I Cuyahoga County Planning Commission (Cleveland, OH)

Denver-Boulder Metropolitan Area (Denver, Colorado)

The Regional Transit District (RTD) serves much of the developed Denver-Boulder metropolitan area, including all or part of Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties. RTD provides a range of transit services, including:

- | Local, express, and regional fixed-route services
- | Paratransit services for ADA eligible individuals
- | Light rail transit
- | Call-and-Ride services for the general public

The core of the RTD system is within downtown Denver and along Highway 36 between Boulder and Denver. Newer suburbs have lower levels of local service, but do not have well-developed service connections to downtown Denver. RTD does not cover all of the metropolitan area. Some local communities augment RTD service with locally provided services. RTD provides some of these services, either directly or under contract, and other agencies pay for and provide the services. Paratransit service is limited in areas that provide only express or regional bus service.

Lessons Learned

- | Reducing unnecessary redundancy of service, such as more than one organization providing service to similar clients in overlapping service areas, can lead to significant cost savings without compromising service
- | Keep abreast of new funding opportunities
- | Importance of periodic face-to-face communication and presentations between providers and potential partners
- | Individuals sitting on boards of multiple service providers, where applicable, encourages collaboration
- | Importance of regional dialogue, especially to understand differences of funding availability and other factors within the region

Tarrant County, Texas

Tarrant County is an urban county located in the north central part of Texas. Fort Worth serves as the county seat to a county population of approximately 1.4 million citizens. Tarrant County is a member of the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

The primary public transit provider in Tarrant County is the Forth Worth Transportation Authority (FWTA). The service, called "The T," is provided to "member" cities but not all cities in the county are members. Many cities have insufficient funding to become members and therefore do not receive T service. As of September 2006, 36 local bus routes operate in Tarrant County and four Express bus routes provide commute service. Rail service is provided between Ft Worth, Dallas and the DFW Airport, in coordination with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). Carpool/vanpool support is also provided.

FWTA provides paratransit service in the service areas of Forth Worth, Richland Hills and Blue Mound. FWTA, however, does not provide paratransit or other specialized services elsewhere in Tarrant County.

Lessons Learned

- | Explore opportunities for economies of scale – single administrative agency and operator for region reduces overhead and redundancy of service, compared to numerous grantees and operators
- | Get key organizations/stakeholders on board – funding agencies, regional/local transportation authorities, and operators
- | "Get out there" – meet potential partners face-to-face, get to know each other, communicate often and develop a persuasive message that is sensitive to their needs
- | Make changes gradually to allow potential partners to become participants as they are able, and identify interim programs and policies (such as providing more limited service and/or at a higher fare in areas that have not yet secured sufficient funding for less expensive, more comprehensive service).
- | Establish channels for regular feedback from partners and clients – quarterly surveys, online customer comment forms, etc.
- | Market program regionally – common brand, centralized phone number and website to get information and procure rides, certification and ID (for disabled, seniors, etc.), standardized policies and fare structures, etc.

Heart of Texas Council of Governments

The Heart of Texas Council of Governments (HOTCOG), established in 1966, is an organization of local governments working together voluntarily to solve mutual problems and plan for the future of the six county area including Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, Limestone and McLennan counties. Currently, HOTCOG has over 80 member government agencies consisting of counties, cities, school districts, community colleges, and special districts.

Lessons Learned

- ┆ According to the current program manager, key to coordination success has been developing trust and establishing effective communication, through frequent face-to-face meetings, between the COG, local governments, and human-service providers, and encouraging their continued involvement in planning and programming activities.

Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) (Austin, Texas)

Austin is the state capital of Texas with a population of almost 700,000 within the city limits and 1.4 million in the region. It is a dynamic city, with a mix of government and high-tech employees, and students, faculty and staff from the University of Texas at Austin. The region surrounding Austin remains quite rural, however, with many small cities of less than 10,000 people. Economic development in the rest of the region has not occurred as it has in Austin, requiring long distance travel for services and employment opportunities.

Lesson Learned

- ┆ To ensure effective communication, CARTS periodically attends meetings scheduled by various local agencies and organizations, to discuss issues and opportunities related to their service.

Chicago Regional Transportation Authority

The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) was created in 1974 upon the approval of a referendum by the residents of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties in northeastern Illinois. The RTA is a special purpose unit of local government and a municipal corporation of the state of Illinois. From the time of its creation, the RTA's mission has been to ensure financially sound, comprehensive and coordinated public transportation for northeastern Illinois.

The RTA system is one of the largest in North America, with over 575 million riders in 2004. The system covers 3,721 square miles with a population of 7.3 million people.

The RTA system includes:

- | The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) provides bus and rapid transit service within the City of Chicago and to 38 suburban municipalities, with about 1.5 million weekday riders. CTA buses carry almost 1 million passengers each weekday while CTA rapid transit carries approximately 500,000 weekday riders.
- | The Commuter Rail Division (Metra) provides commuter rail service connecting downtown Chicago with 68 other Chicago locations and 100 suburban communities. Metra carries approximately 248,000 weekday riders.
- | The Suburban Bus Division (Pace) provides fixed-route bus, paratransit and vanpool services to 200 communities throughout the suburbs and from suburban locations to the City of Chicago. Pace carries approximately 119,000 weekday riders. The CTA, Metra and Pace are each led by a Board of Directors, which determine levels of service, fares and operational policies.

Lessons Learned

- | Formation of a coordinating council of providers that meets bimonthly is increasing communication between providers and those interested in becoming providers.
- | Local agencies and governing bodies often have an intimate knowledge of client needs and opportunities to meet those needs, that they can then communicate to a larger governing body or agency, such as the coordinating council of providers.
- | Likewise, successful coordination activities involve the clients themselves to get their perspective and ideas as to how to provide better service.
- | Regional agencies can help by funding local coordination efforts, offering volume-discounts on capital purchases and leasing of vehicles, and by providing technical guidance and facilitating knowledge transfer within the region (and from other regions).
- | Important for coordination efforts to address both technical and organizational issues – including potential jurisdictional, financial conflicts between providers.
- | A key to success has been collaborative teamwork amongst multiple agencies and direct involvement of funding and other lead agencies in coordination activities.
- | Knowledge transfer and leadership from individuals and organizations with prior experience can support new coordination activities
- | Identify opportunities to educate and involve potential participants in coordination who may not be interested initially.
- | Customized approach to local needs and situations may be more desirable than a universal standardized approach throughout the region.

Maricopa Association of Governments (Phoenix, AZ)

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is a Council of Governments that serves as the regional agency for the metropolitan Phoenix area. MAG provides a regional forum for analysis, discussion and resolution of issues

including areas of transportation, air quality, environment, regional development and social services.

MAG has implemented an Elderly Mobility Initiative to develop and design a transportation system that addresses the needs and issues of elder mobility in the Maricopa region. The MAG Elderly Mobility Stakeholder Group has developed 25 recommendations in the MAG “Regional Action Plan on Aging & Mobility” for creating safe and enhanced mobility options for the region’s mobility, overall quality of life and general travel characteristics.

Lessons Learned

Note: these are recommendations not yet necessarily implemented, from the “Regional Action Plan on Aging and Mobility.”

- | Develop “Family of Services” matrix to compare programs against demographics and varying needs of certain groups
- | Dedicate staff time to support regional coordinating council
- | “One stop shopping” –information system common to the region, including website, telephone number for information and/or arranging rides, etc.
- | Test new programs in pilot areas (or with one or a few organizations before rolling-out to the region)
- | Promote involvement of a variety of potential providers – private sector, faith-based community, civic groups, etc.

Cuyahoga County Planning Commission (Cleveland, OH)

The Cuyahoga County Planning Commission (CPC) performs a unique role in the Cuyahoga County community. As a successor to the Cuyahoga County Regional Planning Commission (RPC), the CPC has over a half century legacy of providing land use, zoning, development, and other planning services for the county's cities, villages, and townships; the Board of County Commissioners; and other governmental and not-for-profit organizations.

It is intended that the CPC be engaged in all facets of the county's planning and implementation activities to achieve compatibility among all units of government.

Lessons Learned

- Important to develop long-term, mid-term, and immediate goals and projects for implementation. Near-term successes provide early benefits and build momentum towards longer-term goals.

Key to their success was first defining transportation needs and what the responsibilities would be to meet these needs, and *then* identify which agencies and organizations are best suited to take on these responsibilities. In their region, there were some concerns about the appropriate role of regional agencies, non-profit organizations, and local municipalities. In the development of a coordination plan, there was a consensus for the need to centralize administration and establish a regional call center to broker requests for services. Initially the organization that would provide this was simply referred to as the Senior Transportation Organization. Ultimately, it was decided that it was less desirable for a public agency to take on this responsibility – a non-profit organization was established that is able to more effectively draw support from local communities and philanthropic organizations. The lead public agency was able to step aside and not feel compelled to take on this responsibility, while still providing important programmatic and funding support.